



White Bird Clinic

MEDIA RELEASE

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Senator Wyden to Visit CAHOOTS, Citing as a Model for Reform

EUGENE, OREGON – *Senator Ron Wyden will meet with White Bird CAHOOTS staff at 9:45 Thursday, July 16th at CAHOOTS headquarters at 970 W 7th Ave in Eugene to discuss how this groundbreaking program can be a model for a national policing reform package and how Congress can best support the work. “The Justice in Policing Act of 2020 takes a vital first step toward accountability, and I am all in with pressing forward to achieve this legislation’s urgently needed re-focus of resources and policies” said Sen. Wyden. Sen. Wyden co-sponsored the legislation, which would hold police accountable, change the culture of law enforcement and build trust between law enforcement and communities in Oregon and nationwide.*

31 years ago White Bird Clinic launched CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) as a community policing initiative to provide mental health first response for crises involving mental illness, homelessness, and addiction. CAHOOTS offers compassionate, effective, timely care while diverting a considerable portion of the public safety workload, conserving police and fire department capacity. In 2019, CAHOOTS handled 17% of the Eugene Police Department’s calls. In 2017, police officers nationally spent 21% of their time responding to or transporting people with mental illness.

Dispatching appropriate responders for each unique situation is essential to ensuring the best outcome. CAHOOTS focuses exclusively on meeting the medical and mental health needs of the community, making it more appropriate, economical, and effective than traditional models involving agencies with a much larger scope of responsibility. Police officers and fire fighters receive training in a broad set of skills, making their deployment to non-emergent situations unnecessarily costly. The CAHOOTS model also ensures that health and behavioral health care are integrated from the onset of intervention and treatment, adding to the efficacy and economy of the model.

White Bird’s CAHOOTS program has attracted notice from international news media as communities across the nation and around the world confront the need to reimagine public safety to ensure that it equitably serves human beings of all races and ethnicities. CAHOOTS is providing strategic guidance and training to assist communities in developing innovative public safety systems that align with their values.

In 1969, a group of student activists and concerned practitioners came together to provide crisis services and free medical care for counter-culture youth in Eugene, OR. Having grown continuously since then, today White Bird Clinic has 10 programs, 220 staff members, and more than 400 volunteers each year.